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House of Representatives

THE BELLS OF BALANGIGA MUST RING AGAIN!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I urge all Members to support H. Con. Res. 168, legislation that I have just introduced, which urges the President to authorize the return of two church bells, currently on display at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming, to the people of the Philippines.

I am introducing the resolution today, June 12th, because of the historical significance of this date to 85 million Filipinos. It is the 109th yearly celebration of Philippine Independence from Spain. The introduction of this resolution will bring hope for the return of the church bells, especially to the parishioners of Balangiga.

It was a result of a conflict, between Filipino and American soldiers in 1901 in the town of Balangiga on the island of Samar, Philippines, that the bells in the Balangiga church were taken to the United States as war trophies where they

have been on display ever since at F.E. Warren Air Force Base.

I am introducing this resolution because of a vote by the Wyoming Veterans Commission in favor of the return of the bells to the church in Balangiga.

The citizens of Balangiga have erected a memorial that includes the names of the Filipino and American soldiers who lost their lives in the 1901 incident, and the town honors these war dead, both those from the Philippines and those from America, on September 28 each year. Filipino people have requested the return of the bells to the original setting in the Balangiga Parish where they could ring again, after 106 years of muteness, as a symbol of this bond.

The acts of conflict that surrounded the Bells of Balangiga are not consistent with the friendship that is an integral part of the relationship between the Republic of

the Philippines and the United States. Filipino soldiers have fought side by side with American troops in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and the bells should more properly serve as a symbol of friendship and not of conflict.

For this reason, I urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 168.